

JUDGING FOR MUSCLING

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We are in the beef business and beef is muscle. Besides structural correctness and reproduction, muscling in bulls plays an important role in judging. Unfortunately it has an effect on the appearance of animals and overfat animals are often described wrongly as well muscled or fleshed cattle.

Basic principles which are important in the assessment of muscling in the showing and on the farm, are adapted from well-known scientists Prof. Bob Long, Dr Geoff Harwin, Prof. R Barton and Dr Rex Butterfield. These principles are based on research and will assist our breeders and judges in their selection for muscling in bulls. Why bulls and not females? Our motto in this regard is: "The muscling or beef of a Simmentaler cow is seen in her calf". (C Peter Massmann)

- Muscle is best measured by looking at the forearm viz. the area between the knee and elbow. If an animal is heavily muscled over the forearm it is always heavily muscled throughout the entire body.
- There is no animal with well developed muscles in one part of his body and poorly developed muscles in another part. If he has poorly developed muscles in one part then they will be poorly developed all over.
- As a well muscled animal walks, the muscles are clearly defined and firm with no sign of flabbiness. Only fat is inanimate and "wobbles".
- Distinction between fat and muscle can be made by remembering that fat hangs and drapes and shakes while muscle moves and bulges when cattle walk.
- We cannot move the attachment of muscles around - they are fixed. What you can do however, is shorten or lengthen the bones so that muscle attachment is brought close together or farther apart. An animal will have muscle "right down to the hocks" only because his hocks have been brought up closer to his stifles; not because his muscle attachments have changed.
- Some think that great depth in the flank is associated with muscling. but if we look at the structure here it is obvious that the only things which can produce "depth of flank" is fat.
- Excessive muscling is associated with some loss in cow production traits and selection for it should be avoided.

BULLS TESTED

The growth ability and feed conversion ratio of young bulls is measured und standardised conditions at central testing centres. Bulls not older than 270 days and within a certain weight range based on breed (Simmentaler 260-320 kg) are tested for 112 days following an adaptation period of 28 days. They are individually fed a growth ration comprising at least 20% roughage on an ad libitum basis. The following are the results of the 1991-95 test series for breeds which tested more than 50 bulls.

	No. of bulls	Gain/day 112 days (g)	Gain/day Birth to end of test (g)	Feed conversion rate	With year
SIMMENTALER	1009	1891	1330	6.5	
SIMBRA	95	1557	1141	6.3	
Afrikaner	217	1231	894	7.1	
Bonsmara	2148	1645	1122	6.7	
Brahman	261	1317	1033	6.8	

Charolais	68	1918	1297	6.0	
Drakensberger	208	1541	1084	6.9	
Gelbvieh	59	1852	1264	6.7	
Hereford	117	1819	1283	6.2	
Limousin	120	1663	186	6.5	
Nguni	117	1137	802	6.7	
Pinzgauer	257	1802	1229	6.7	
S.A. Angus	307	1798	1244	6.5	
Santa Gertrudis	416	1740	1195	6.3	
Sussex	191	1632	1172	6.5	